



STOKING YOUR INNOVATION BONFIRE

Innovation Health Checks

COURTESY OF BRADEN KELLEY

Ten diagnostic tools to evaluate your organization's innovation health across the core barriers that prevent innovation from flourishing inspired by the bestselling book *Stoking Your Innovation Bonfire*.

The Ten Health Checks

1. Vision
2. Strategy
3. Goals
4. Insights
5. Idea Generation
6. Idea Evaluation
7. Idea Development
8. Organizational Psychology
9. Information and Structural
10. Sustainability

HOW TO USE THESE HEALTH CHECKS

- Complete each health check individually or as a leadership team. If completing as a team, compare individual scores before discussing—this reveals differences in perception that are themselves an important insight.
- Rate statements honestly based on evidence, not aspiration. Score what you observe happening, not what you intend or believe should be happening.
- Use your total score to identify your biggest barriers, then use the reflection prompt to design specific actions.
- Repeat the health checks every 6–12 months to track progress and identify new barriers as your innovation capability matures.



Vision

A compelling, shared vision is the starting point of all sustainable innovation. Use the statements below to evaluate how clearly your organization's vision enables—or inhibits—innovative thinking and action.

HOW TO USE THIS HEALTH CHECK

Rate your organization honestly against each statement using the 1–5 scale below. Be specific: base your rating on evidence and observable behavior, not aspiration.

Statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neither	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
Our organization has a clearly articulated vision that everyone can describe in their own words.					
Our vision actively inspires people to think differently and challenge the status quo.					
Leaders consistently reference and reinforce the vision when making decisions.					
Our vision provides a meaningful direction for innovation without being so prescriptive that it limits creative thinking.					
Employees at all levels understand how their daily work connects to the broader vision.					
Our vision is reviewed and refreshed often enough to remain relevant in a changing environment.					
We use our vision to filter and prioritize which innovation opportunities to pursue.					
Our vision is compelling enough to attract and retain people who are passionate about innovation.					

SCORING GUIDE (add up your ratings for a total out of 40)

Score	What it suggests
32–40	Strong foundation — identify what you are doing well and how to sustain it.
24–31	Developing capability — some good practices exist but important gaps remain.
16–23	Significant barriers — focused investment and change needed in this area.
Below 16	Critical risk — this barrier is likely limiting innovation organization-wide.

Reflection prompt: Which statements scored lowest? What one change to how you communicate or apply your vision would have the greatest positive impact on innovation?

NOTES



Strategy

Innovation without strategy is just experimentation. Strategy without innovation is just incremental improvement. This health check examines how well your innovation efforts are integrated into your broader strategic framework.

HOW TO USE THIS HEALTH CHECK

Rate your organization honestly against each statement using the 1–5 scale below. Be specific: base your rating on evidence and observable behavior, not aspiration.

Statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neither	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
We have an explicit innovation strategy that is aligned with our overall business strategy.					
Senior leaders actively champion and resource our innovation strategy.					
We have a clear process for deciding how much to invest in core, adjacent, and transformational innovation.					
Our innovation strategy is well understood by the people responsible for executing it.					
We regularly review whether our innovation strategy is producing the intended outcomes.					
Our innovation strategy balances short-term wins with long-term competitive advantage.					
We have mechanisms to ensure strategic learning flows back into future innovation decisions.					
Our strategy creates a genuine competitive advantage through innovation, not just efficiency.					

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Reflection prompt: *Where are the biggest gaps between your stated innovation strategy and actual innovation activity? What would closing those gaps require?*

NOTES



Goals

Clear, meaningful innovation goals focus energy and make it possible to know whether you are making progress. This health check explores whether your goals are driving the right innovation behaviors.

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Rate your organization honestly against each statement using the 1–5 scale below. Be specific: base your rating on evidence and observable behavior, not aspiration.

Statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neither	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
We have specific, measurable innovation goals that are separate from our operational targets.					
Our innovation goals are ambitious enough to require genuine creative thinking.					
Teams understand exactly what success looks like for the innovation work they are doing.					
We use leading indicators (inputs and activities) as well as lagging indicators (outputs and outcomes) to track innovation progress.					
Our innovation goals are regularly reviewed and adjusted in response to new information.					
People are rewarded and recognized for making progress toward innovation goals, not just achieving operational targets.					
We avoid setting innovation goals that inadvertently discourage risk-taking or experimentation.					
Innovation goals are cascaded through the organization so every team knows how they contribute.					

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Reflection prompt: Are your current goals measuring activity or genuine innovation progress? What one goal would, if achieved, transform your innovation capability?

NOTES



Insights

Great innovations are almost always rooted in deep, human-centered insight. This health check assesses how effectively your organization generates, captures, and applies insights to fuel innovation.

HOW TO USE THIS HEALTH CHECK

Rate your organization honestly against each statement using the 1–5 scale below. Be specific: base your rating on evidence and observable behavior, not aspiration.

Statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neither	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
We have regular, systematic processes for gathering insights about customer needs, frustrations, and unmet desires.					
We look for insights beyond our existing customers to understand non-customers and emerging segments.					
We use a range of qualitative and quantitative methods to generate insights.					
Insights are captured in a way that makes them accessible and actionable for innovation teams.					
We look at adjacent industries and sectors for insights that could be applied to our context.					
Our people are skilled at translating raw observations into meaningful innovation-relevant insights.					
We track how insights are used in innovation projects so we can improve our insight generation over time.					
Emerging trends, signals, and weak signals are actively monitored and discussed.					

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Reflection prompt: *What insights are you currently ignoring or underutilizing? How could richer insights change the innovation opportunities you pursue?*

NOTES

Idea Generation



Volume and diversity of ideas are important preconditions for innovation success. This health check explores whether your organization creates the right conditions for rich, varied idea generation.

HOW TO USE THIS HEALTH CHECK

Rate your organization honestly against each statement using the 1–5 scale below. Be specific: base your rating on evidence and observable behavior, not aspiration.

Statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neither	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
We have multiple structured processes for generating new ideas across the organization.					
People feel genuinely safe to share unusual, unconventional, or even 'bad' ideas without judgement.					
We deliberately involve diverse perspectives—including frontline staff, customers, and external partners—in idea generation.					
Our idea generation processes are connected to real strategic challenges or customer insights.					
We use a variety of creative techniques and tools to stimulate different types of thinking.					
Ideas are generated on a regular cadence, not just when there is a perceived crisis.					
We track the volume and diversity of ideas being generated over time.					
Senior leaders actively participate in and visibly value idea generation activities.					

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Reflection prompt: *What is currently limiting the volume or variety of ideas in your organization? What would it take to double the number of high-quality ideas generated?*

NOTES

Idea Evaluation



How you evaluate ideas shapes what gets pursued—and what gets killed prematurely. This health check examines whether your evaluation processes are fair, rigorous, and innovation-friendly.

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Rate your organization honestly against each statement using the 1–5 scale below. Be specific: base your rating on evidence and observable behavior, not aspiration.

Statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neither	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
We have a clear, consistent process for evaluating new ideas that is understood by everyone involved.					
Our evaluation criteria are appropriate for the stage of development—we don't apply the same tests to early concepts as to mature proposals.					
We evaluate ideas against strategic fit and innovation potential, not just financial return.					
Our evaluation processes actively guard against bias toward familiar or incremental ideas.					
We involve people with diverse skills and perspectives in idea evaluation.					
We give idea generators clear, constructive feedback rather than simply accepting or rejecting ideas.					
We track which ideas we reject and review those decisions periodically to learn from them.					
Our evaluation process is fast enough that good ideas don't lose momentum.					

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Reflection prompt: *What types of ideas are consistently passed over or killed in evaluation? What might you be losing as a result?*

NOTES



Idea Development

Generating ideas is only the beginning. Developing them into viable innovations requires discipline, resources, and the right enabling conditions. This health check assesses your idea development capability.

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Rate your organization honestly against each statement using the 1–5 scale below. Be specific: base your rating on evidence and observable behavior, not aspiration.

Statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neither	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
We have a clear pathway that takes ideas from concept through to implementation.					
Innovation projects have dedicated time, budget, and people rather than being squeezed around day-to-day work.					
We use rapid prototyping and experimentation to test and refine ideas before committing significant resources.					
Innovation teams have access to the skills, tools, and external expertise they need.					
We create appropriate 'safe spaces' where innovation teams can work without being subject to normal operational rules and metrics.					
We have clear decision points (gates) where innovation projects are reviewed and either advanced, adapted, or stopped.					
Learning from failed innovation projects is captured and shared across the organization.					
We celebrate and recognize teams that develop innovations, regardless of whether they succeed commercially.					

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Reflection prompt: *Where do ideas most often stall or die in your development process? What would accelerate the development of your most promising innovations?*

NOTES



Organizational Psychology

The culture, mindsets, and psychological environment of your organization may be the single most powerful enabler—or inhibitor—of innovation. This health check explores the human side of your innovation ecosystem.

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Rate your organization honestly against each statement using the 1–5 scale below. Be specific: base your rating on evidence and observable behavior, not aspiration.

Statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neither	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
People across our organization genuinely believe that innovation is part of their role, not just something for a specialist team.					
Failure is treated as a source of learning rather than a reason for blame or punishment.					
Constructive challenge of the status quo is welcomed and rewarded at all levels.					
Leaders model the innovative behaviors they want to see in others.					
People feel they have the autonomy to experiment and try new approaches in their work.					
We actively work to identify and reduce fear—of failure, of judgement, of rocking the boat—as a barrier to innovation.					
Collaboration and knowledge sharing across teams and functions is the norm, not the exception.					
We have a shared language and set of values around innovation that reinforces the right behaviors.					

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Reflection prompt: *What are the two or three psychological barriers most limiting innovation in your organization? What leadership behaviors are reinforcing those barriers?*

NOTES



Information and Structural

Innovation rarely fails because of a shortage of good ideas. It more often fails because of organizational structures, processes, and information flows that get in the way. This health check examines the structural context for innovation.

HOW TO USE THIS HEALTH CHECK

Rate your organization honestly against each statement using the 1–5 scale below. Be specific: base your rating on evidence and observable behavior, not aspiration.

Statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neither	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
Our organizational structure makes it easy for teams with different skills and knowledge to collaborate on innovation.					
Decision-making authority for innovation is placed as close as possible to the people doing the work.					
Information about customers, competitors, and market trends is freely available to people who need it for innovation.					
Our internal processes and governance systems do not create unnecessary barriers to innovation progress.					
We have mechanisms to identify and remove structural barriers that are slowing down innovation.					
Innovation work is visible across the organization—people can see what is being worked on and why.					
We have the right digital tools and infrastructure to support rapid experimentation and knowledge sharing.					
Our HR systems—including hiring, performance management, and reward—actively support rather than inadvertently hinder innovation.					

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Reflection prompt: Which structural or process barriers are causing the most innovation drag in your organization? Who has the authority and motivation to remove them?

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Sustainability

Innovation capability that endures requires ongoing investment, learning, and renewal. This final health check examines how well your organization is building innovation as a lasting, self-reinforcing capability.

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Rate your organization honestly against each statement using the 1–5 scale below. Be specific: base your rating on evidence and observable behavior, not aspiration.

Statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neither	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
Innovation is treated as a long-term capability investment, not a short-term program or initiative.					
We systematically measure and report on the health of our innovation capability over time.					
We invest in developing innovation skills and mindsets at all levels of the organization.					
Our innovation efforts are resilient to leadership changes, budget pressures, and strategic shifts.					
We regularly benchmark our innovation capability against peers and best-in-class organizations.					
We have a community of internal innovation champions who sustain momentum between formal programs.					
The organization learns from both its innovation successes and failures and applies those lessons systematically.					
Innovation is genuinely embedded in how we work day-to-day, not confined to special projects or off-sites.					

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Reflection prompt: *Is innovation in your organization a genuine ongoing capability or a series of disconnected initiatives? What would make your innovation efforts more self-sustaining?*

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